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Mountains



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Chapter 1 by Magnolia

I listened to the car grind against the rocky path as we bumped forwards very slowly. With the windows down, I took a deep breath of the fresh mountain air. I watch the plants and trees pass by as we made our way to our little cabin. The radio was turned off so we could listen to the mountain's music. I heard a variety of birds calling and singing to each other and leaves flapping helplessly in the wind. The forest was as alive as ever.

I saw a deer and her fawn in the distance as birds flew overhead. A chipmunk and a snake brawl as they moved across the ground in fight and flight. I liked the woods. I liked how everything was natural and meant to be alive for one reason or another. Everything had it's purpose in the flow of life, no matter how small. I liked the absence of human waste and pain.

I tore my eyes away from the window to look over at my cousin in the other car seat. She was also taking in the sights of the forest. I smiled and poked her stomach. She grunted and poked my arm in return. I looked forward to see our path bend around a group of trees. My grandparents owned a little cabin in a private area that was only accessible by those with a key to open the gate.

We rode in silence, letting the sounds of our surroundings take place of conversation. Finally, we reached our little cabin. The gate was open and we heard branches crunch under our tires as we drove in. Something inside the cabin moved, but we assumed it was just a animal laying in. But my cousin, Kristin, swore it was human like.

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"Jess, Kristin, come on. We need to sweep out the old place before we light the fire." Our grandmother called us to the cabin door.

Chapter 2 by JM



The man liked that Kristin had noticed him; even more, he enjoyed her family's dismissal of her fears. People up in these parts tended to be the trusting type--unlocked doors, open windows, no security systems. Not even a dog.

Quietly, he climbed the stairs to the third floor and made his way to the attic through a small opening in the smallest bedroom. Already it had been decorated with frilly pink linens and fresh cut flowers in ornate vases--perfect for two young girls.

Anticipation gnawed at his every nerve but he knew he had to play this safe. The Leader had high intentions for Jess, and the man knew better than to let him down.

Chapter 3 by NewShamu



"Jess, be a dear and bring your poor old grandmother's bag in, would you?" Jess's grandmother smiled at her expectantly.

"Yes, grandma," she replied. With an exaggerated sigh, Jess shouldered the extra bag and started after her grandfather for the door.

Jess struggled as she worked her way up the porch steps, carrying luggage in both hands. When she got to the top she heard her grandfather muttering to himself as he opened the door.

"What's up, grandpa?" she asked him.

"Blasted door," He cursed. "Musta blown open from the wind. Perhaps some crazed animal tried to get inside." Noticing Jess's heavy load, he hoisted the extra bag off her shoulders. "You know, there's all kindsa wild animals livin' out there," he warned, his eyes scanning the forest. "These woods are dangerous. Best keep yer wits about ya and don't wander too far after dark, now ya

hear?"

"Yeah, yeah, grandpa," Jess rolled her eyes. She slipped through the door into the empty cabin. "You tell us that every

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Once inside, Jess went straight up the rickety old stairs to the girls' usual room on the second floor. The cabin was cozy, but sparsely decorated. There wasn't much beyond the usual furnishings. The floorboards creaked as she shuffled into her room and let the bags drop. With a sigh, she plopped down on one of the beds, happy to get their vacation underway.

As she lay there, Kristin wandered into the room. She sat on the corner of the bed and looked around anxiously. "Have you seen Holly?" she asked. Although Jess never believed any of grandpa's crazy stories, Kristin was terribly frightened of the creatures that grandpa claimed to be lurking in the woods. Holly was one of their grandmother's old dolls. She kept it at the cabin because it seemed to be the only thing that could truly make Kristin feel at ease up here in the mountains.

Jess rolled her eyes again. "I'm sure she's around here somewhere," she sighed. "Besides, we should go help unpack. We've got lots to do this week."

Kristin nodded reluctantly and stood to go. But as she trailed out behind her cousin, she couldn't help but wonder where that doll had gotten to.

Chapter 4 by Shannon



He had lurked deep in the attic in the dank, gloominess of forgotten relics from years past. How easy it was for people to just hide the things they had no use for. Forget of their purpose. He had listened to the girls chatter while they unpacked their summer attire. A sense of longing desire to feel loved and appreciated by the The Leader over swept him with a chilled nervousness he couldn't quite place. He would be pleased with him once he got Jess. Once she had returned to the secret place deep in the woods. There the ritual would take place for both girls. Jess was the key though. The Leader needed her more than he needed Kristen. Jess was something special.

He pondered on this for some time. What it would be like once it was all finished. He didn't realize how much time had passed until he had heard dishes clatter into the sink. Grandma Peggy rinsing and washing while she sent the girls to get some sleep after their long trip. He

wished he could just take them whilst they slept to their beds but it was too soon he was under strict orders not to act impulsive. It was too great. So while the girls nestled into their warm beds and he finished his preparations, he grabbed Holly and went to sleep.

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